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SUBJECT: VENEZUELAN EMBASSY'S SEMINAR ON THE SOCIAL CHARTER OF THE AMERICAS

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1. (SBU) On 6/15, Political Section FSN Assistant attended a "Participative Forum/Workshop" sponsored by the Embassy of Venezuela in Lima entitled "The Social Charter of the Americas (SCA)." Summaries of the interventions by the scheduled speakers are provided below.

2. (U) Ambassador Jorge Valero Briceno -- Permanent Representative of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela to the OAS: In April 2002, Venezuela suffered a terrible blow when stateless persons (personas apatridas), the CIA and the U.S. Government kidnapped President Chavez for 72 hours.

-- Latin America was used to an OAS which was distant from us, but the Social Charter will serve to integrate the peoples of the Americas. Bolivar said: "The most perfect system of government is that which produces the greatest amount of happiness possible, the greatest amount of social security and the greatest amount of political stability." The Social Charter is an instrument to bring the words of Bolivar up to date. This Charter is the result of an intense and profound debate within the OAS, the most important debate since its creation in Bogota in 1948. It is a debate on the nature of democracy in the continent. Venezuela believes that it is not enough to simply promote the political and civil rights of representative democracy, there is a need to incorporate the notion of participative democracy which the Bolivarian Constitution approved through a referendum in 1999.

-- Participative democracy is a historical improvement over the political reality of the 60's and 70's marked by fascist and terrorist dictatorships. Participative democracy allows the people to play a major role day in and day out. There are various types of referenda authorized in our Constitution. Democracy cannot exist if all it guarantees are free elections. It is not tolerable that the poor are only allowed to exercise their rights in a limited fashion, they must be capable of fully enjoying their rights. From a historical perspective, within the United Nations a block of nations used to traditionally stress the importance of political and civil rights while the other block stressed the importance of social, economic and cultural rights.

-- The OAS has had a long journey in which some nations claimed that social, economic and cultural rights were already included within the political and civil rights and thus, it was unnecessary to introduce the Inter-American Social Charter, while other nations claimed that it was necessary to promote a debate about this matter. After 3 years of debate in the OAS Headquarters a decision was made for the OAS to study the Charter, and finally in October 2004 a workgroup was created and in May 2005 a president for this workgroup was selected.

-- The Inter-American Democratic Charter has no popular support, it was discussed only among diplomats, that's why we need for the common people to take part in the discussion of the Social Charter of the Americas. In Venezuela, one million copies of the Social Charter of the Latin American Parliament were distributed throughout the country, and many events were organized in that regard.

-- In the OAS the process will be officially inaugurated on September 1, 2005. There will be negotiators and two different models of development are being proposed: the neo-liberal and the humanistic models. Jose Miguel Insulza will request the support of all representative governments in the OAS. The SCA must include the aspirations of all the peoples, and the people need to monitor the process and make sure their governments are adhering to the ideas contained in the SCA.

-- Venezuela has had oil since the beginning of the 19th century and the first oil companies began operating at the beginning of the 20th century. It has accumulated huge riches. However, when President Chavez came to power, there was 80 percent poverty in the country. Oil helped to worsen corruption and made differences between the elites and the

people more acute. Public debts must be paid, but it is more important to pay the social debt of Latin American countries. This is the first time oil has been used to produce hemispheric solidarity, facilities offered to poorer countries to diminish the effect of a lack of oil in their territories.

-- The Government of Venezuela is considering the possibility of creating a transportation company, "Petroleo Caribe," to eliminate speculators so that Caribbean nations can use the money they save in transportation in addressing other needs of their people.

-- A historical mutation is taking place in the continent, i.e., the U.S. proposal to monitor and control the OAS member countries, assigning the role of a guardian to the OAS, was defeated with the support of the majority of OAS states. President Chavez is being accused of exporting his Bolivarian Government, i.e., the U.S. has spread the rumor that Chavez contributed to the defeat of Sanchez de Losada in Bolivia, while in fact his defeat was the result of a social volcano.

-- The Bolivarian revolution is not exportable, just as the Soviet Union's revolution wasn't, that being the reason why the latter failed in the countries that tried to copy it. Just as the neo-liberal model being forced upon all countries is failing (and fortunately the so-called "Washington Consensus"), the neo-liberal and macro-economic adjustment policies have also failed. There are 240 million poor living in Latin America and the Caribbean, and six million people descend into poverty every year.

-- The Embassy of Venezuela has open doors to hear all those who wish to express their views.

13. (U) Representative Walter Gavidia -- Vice-President of the Latin American Parliament and President of the Venezuelan Parliamentary Group: It is essential to eliminate extreme poverty. The OAS discussed poverty for the first time in 2003. The principal problem in Latin America and the Caribbean is poverty.

-- Why is a Social Charter needed? It is: a) to promote the integration of the people of the Americas; b) to satisfy basic needs of the people; c) to address the social debt -- poverty, inequity and social exclusion. There are basic social rights: to a decent life, to being nourished, to development. We must subsidize the food of our poor people (the U.S. and Europe subsidize their agricultural products and exports). Communities must organize and take part in their own development.

-- The people must be informed about what is being done and spread the word about the Social Charter, which must be internalized to help people in extreme poverty. All states have received the SCA in a positive way, except for the United States, that has always opposed it.

14. (U) Raul Diaz Marin -- President of the "Heroes of Pacification:" There is a need for social justice, transparency, training in public administration, and a vision of a future where efficiency and effectiveness prevail. This will result in a model population where tradition and modernity will come together. There is also a need for social development policies. Poverty, environmental degradation, and hunger must be addressed through strategic and viable plans. Human rights and respect for women's rights must be promoted.

15. (U) Jose Chang -- President of the Brigade of Bolivarian Volunteers of Peru: His organization was created 23 years ago and has 22 branches in the provinces and 8 in Lima. Its goal is to promote solidarity among all people. Young people currently lack information and paradigms. The government of President Hugo Chavez is the author of the Social Charter of the Americas (SCA). There is a need to reestablish the OAS through the SCA. The image, credibility and administration of the OAS has been hurt by its guilty silence and lies. A true leadership is required to run the OAS. The seven titles, 18 chapters and 140 articles of the SCA address the current problems of the world in an integral way. All States should promote the work of volunteers in their own countries.

16. (U) Juan Chafloque -- Huaycan Self-Governing Urban Community: There is no real housing program for the poor in Peru. The homes being built by "Mi Vivienda" (the GOP's low-cost housing construction program) are too expensive for most workers, who only earn 400 to 480 soles (USD 125 to 150) per month. There is a need for decent housing. Thanks to the people's efforts in Huaycan, water and sewage systems are being built. His organization believes that the SCA is an important step towards development. Cuba and Venezuela have eradicated illiteracy among their citizens. Peru is full of street vendors and car washers.

17. (U) Jorge Ramirez -- ASONEDH (Black Association for the Defense and Advancement of Human Rights): ASONEDH has been fighting for the rights of Afro-Peruvians for the last 15 years. Ten percent of the Peruvian population is Afro-Peruvian. Currently, there is rampant discrimination against Afro-Peruvians in Peru. Blacks are treated as second-class citizens and are not allowed to occupy important positions. He was a witness of the social sensibility shown by the Venezuelan Government. He was in Caracas for a month and was able to perceive the inclusion of Indians and Afro-Venezuelan citizens in its society. Venezuela is an example for other countries. The SCA is the result of this policy of inclusion, and is a road towards inclusion. The people feel hopeful about this Charter. ASONEDH hopes Peru will some day become a country of "all bloods," one of equality and respect for one another.

18. (U) Carlos Jimenez -- CGTP (General Confederation of Workers of Peru): The CGTP is very worried about the situation in Latin America. There is one permanent problem: the foreign debt keeps growing. Natural resources are exported in ever growing quantities. There is a state of exclusion and poverty, which results in the migration of our citizens. The capitalist and neo-liberal model resulted in the State losing its traditional role and functions, citizens were left unprotected and on their own. There is a need to recover those rights and the SCA has that goal in mind. An alternative model to the one currently in place in most countries is needed. The current model does not represent the interests of the workers or the people. Contacts must be encouraged between workers from the Andean Region and Mercosur. The rights of workers must be globalized as a way of responding to the globalization of the economy. It is essential to recover economic, social and cultural rights of the workers in this Region.

19. (U) Representative Filinto Duran -- President of the Social Debt Committee in the Latin American Parliament: How was the Social Charter written? Through a process of collective construction. All sectors could contribute to it: a true participative democracy. There are two ways of viewing democracy in Latin America and in the OAS headquarters, two life-concepts: one is a model of accumulation of capital that favors one sector but causes poverty to grow and increases the number of victims of exclusion and poverty. Those who benefit from this model wish to maintain the accumulation model (i.e., IMF, World Bank, WTO).

-- Why does poverty grow if the world is richer? A world of accumulation persists, if there are no excluded masses there can be no accumulation (i.e., VIASA was swallowed by Iberia, and Iberia will be swallowed by a larger fish, and so on).

-- The Bolivarian Constitution of 1992 was the child of the "Caracazo" of 1989. This is a wise constitution because it will permit a new foundation for the republic. Venezuela's constitution reflects the country its citizens aspire to have some day. Society will build a participative, multi-ethnic and pluri-cultural democracy, and Venezuelans are advancing toward a social democracy, a true democracy free of exploitation and one that honors public liberties. Representative democracy does not guarantee a true equality of opportunities. Twenty percent of Venezuelans (the elites) are traumatized watching the invisible and excluded 80 percent gain dignity and the chance to speak up. We need to build a state where justice and equal opportunity prevail. We must give the captive peoples the social rights stolen from them by neo-liberalism. We need to go from a state where the rule of law prevails to one where justice prevails (an equality of rights and obligations) within the framework of humanism: the human being should be the most important consideration.

-- With the Cuban people's cooperation, one and a half million Venezuelans learned how to read and write in 2003/2004. Terrorism must be fought, but in order to do that it is essential to also fight poverty and inequality.

-- Democracy and governmental stability do not depend solely on democratic policies, these will be in danger if the social demands of the people are not addressed. The SCA is an instrument to eradicate poverty and the states have made a commitment to promote a debate of this Charter. It represents a rejection of neo-liberal policies, conservative positions and hegemonic powers located in the United States.

10. (U) Venezuelan Representative Chirinos: The Venezuelan constitution was discussed broadly in all towns of Venezuela, it promotes respect for human rights and the integration of the people. In Venezuela there is a public debt of 27 billion dollars, but the internal debt is 3 times that amount. There is now in Venezuela a health campaign being carried out with the support of the Cuban people, which looks after the health needs of those individuals who

don't have social security. 15,000 Cuban doctors have come to help us.

-- Venezuela is an oil-rich nation, it has some of the largest oil reserves in the world. In previous years the authorities in power kept all the profits, currently that money is reverting to the people of Venezuela in the form of culture and education. A multi-polar world embracing a new geopolitical view is needed; the world cannot continue with a single hegemonic power. In 1950, 50 percent of the people in the world were poor; today, 80 percent of them are poor. This Charter is an instrument to reduce the poverty levels in Latin America and the Caribbean.

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